

TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS

SPEECH OF

HON. WAYNE ALLARD

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 17, 1996

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, Congress has passed a new Taxpayers' Bill of Rights to help level the playing field between our citizens and the IRS.

The Tax Code is long and complicated, and taxpayers make legitimate mistakes on their returns. When folks make honest mistakes, they shouldn't be exposed to what often boils down to bullying and harassment by the IRS.

The Taxpayers' Bill of Rights reforms numerous tax collecting operations of the IRS to protect taxpayers. Foremost is the creation of a taxpayer advocate, who must assist taxpayers in resolving and preventing problems with the IRS. The advocate also can require the IRS to meet deadlines in performing tasks for taxpayers.

Other important provisions include changes in terminating tax payment plans, waiving interest and penalties, and awarding costs and fees in legal disputes.

Many people view the IRS as a massive bureaucracy that acts without proper authority. This important bill makes a number of changes to protect people who have legitimate grievances with the IRS, while ensuring that taxes are collected fairly.

This bill was adopted just 1 day after the House unfortunately failed to approve a tax amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The amendment would have required a full two-thirds of the House or Senate vote to approve any legislation that would increase personal, business, or other Federal taxes.

Although I am disappointed the amendment failed, I am pleased by the broad support it did receive.

Congress has proven time and again that it cannot control its urge to raise taxes. The amendment would have created more accountability and would have forced Congress to work in a more bipartisan manner on tax issues.

Passage of the second Taxpayers' Bill of Rights helps take away some of the sting from the failure of the tax amendment.

MORE INDIAN OPPRESSION

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 18, the Indian police detained six Kashmiri leaders when they tried to peacefully walk to India's military headquarters in the Kashmiri capital of Srinagar to protest India's human rights violations.

The six, who are well known on Capitol Hill for their tireless efforts to win the right of self-determination for Kashmiris and are all executive members of the All Parties Hurriyat—Freedom—Conference, were stopped by police as they approached the United Nations Military Observer Group's office. Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Abdul Gani Lone, Shabir Shah, Abdul Gani Bhat, Moulana Abass Ansari, and

Yasin Malik were only allowed to walk 2 kilometers—1 mile—through the deserted streets on Srinagar before being detained by police.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, the Government of India has banned public gatherings in Kashmir to prevent protests against India for its terrible human rights violations against the people of Kashmir. In response to this continual brutality, the Hurriyat had called a strike in the Kashmir Valley and asked Kashmiris to remain indoors. Why did these leaders risk their lives to challenge India? According to Abdul Gani Bhat—one of the detainees, we walked to offer our lives to the Indian army for peace and stability in the whole sub-continent.

Most of these leaders have already narrowly escaped attempts on their lives by renegade militant groups which have been armed and supported by India's intelligence agencies. So perhaps for them—risking their lives one more time is business as usual. Nevertheless, their bravery to secure peace and happiness for the people of Kashmir should not be ignored here in the U.S. Congress.

Mr. Speaker, while I wish I could say that this most recent incident is isolated—it is not. For the last decade, the Government of India has used every measure at its disposal to suppress the peace-loving people of Kashmir who desire nothing more than the internationally-recognized right of self-determination. As Thursday's events demonstrate, the leadership of India only respects the right of free speech when the words are spoken by the majority Hindu population. The time has come for the U.S. Government to forcefully condemn this tyrannical behavior and demand the immediate release of these six Kashmiri leaders.

If India ever hopes to be treated as the world class power it believes it is—it must respect human rights.

IN HONOR OF THE HOMETOWN TREES PROGRAM

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Hometown Trees Program for its dedicated service toward improving and preserving hometown landscapes. The program which began 4 years ago will plant its 4 millionth tree on Earth Day, April 22, 1996. I would also like to take this opportunity to honor Kristin Hyman, the 9-year-old grand-prize winner in a nationwide contest on the importance of trees.

The Hometown Trees Program has prospered since its inception 4 years ago. Every spring, the program teams up with thousands of local volunteers who plant trees in their communities to ensure that future generations will enjoy their natural beauty. To date, through the Hometown Trees Program, more than 3 million trees have been rooted in over 1,500 cities in 43 States.

The program's pledge to enhance, protect and generate awareness about the environment is of great importance. The planting of one tree today will serve the community for hundreds of years to come. This program also develops amongst our children an appreciation for nature that will serve our Nation for generations that follow.

In February, a nationwide essay contest was held to increase children's environmental awareness and appreciation. I am pleased to announce to my colleagues that the winner of the nationwide event was 9-year-old Kristin Hyman of Bayonne, NJ. Her poem, "Tree Reasons," was selected from the hundreds of entries received in her age group for its creativity and uniqueness. I am proud to say that she will be honored in a special ceremony in her hometown on Earth Day.

I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring the achievements of the Home Trees Program and its continuing commitment to the environment. I would also like to pay tribute to Kristin Hyman, a special young lady who has demonstrated to her community that no one is ever too young to care for and appreciate the environment. I am proud to have such a talented young woman living within my district.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

HON. CARLOS A. ROMERO-BARCELÓ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Democratic efforts to raise the Federal minimum wage.

The proposal for a moderate 90-cent increase in 2 years is needed because workers at the minimum wage level have actually seen their real incomes decrease in the last decades. In 1979, the minimum wage was the equivalent of about \$6 per hour in 1996 dollars.

Real wages and the purchasing power of millions of families have become stagnant. We must support the incentives that reward hard work, such as a minimum wage.

When I was Governor of Puerto Rico, I took the bold step of asking the Federal Government to extend minimum wage laws to Puerto Rico, where at the time they did not apply. Special interests and many corporations lobbied hard against it, predicting economic havoc and job displacement.

Such bleak scenarios did not materialize. In fact, the minimum wage has been a blessing for the 3.7 million American citizens of Puerto Rico. It raised the standard of living of thousands of working class families, took tens of thousands of working families out of welfare and brought them added dignity.

Both sides of the aisle should seek to promote and assure a decent standard of living for all Americans. Raising the minimum wage is a wise move, based on solid economic policy and common sense.

I urge our colleagues to support raising the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour over the next 2 years. Millions of hard working Americans who deserve better economic opportunities will appreciate our leadership.

SALUTE TO DON NICOLAI, CHEVRON USA AND OLYMPIC HIGH SCHOOL

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to salute the contributions of